2. Cults

793 Each of these gods is worshipped by specific cults; each
787 has his specific priest whom he "enters" from time to time,
794 makes him "possessed," and lets him prophesy and perform
● 756 feats of magic. There are male and female priests. Allegedly the female ones remain unmarried. Divine power and inspiration and the predisposition for being possessed are in most cases passed on from father to son or daughter in the same manner as the power to heal and to raise spirits which is held by the medicine men (abafumu).

793 In Urundi these priests are called iviranga (sing. kiranga); in Ruanda, imandwa; in Kisiba, wabandwa. Among the persons who dedicate themselves to the cult of gods and spirits, the kiranga most of all has the character and functions of the priest in our sense. He has the same name as the god Kiranga (derived from the word root kira, to put in order), and he is regarded both as the representative and as the ambulatory abode of the god himself. Men or women become kiranga either because their fathers or mothers were kiranga and transmitted this talent after their death or as a result of having been struck but not killed by lightning, the sign of the power of the god (No. 19, p. 253), or they are seized by the spirit and enter a state of
[828] manic possession at the Kubandwa celebration or the "sacred spear" ceremony (cf. p. 134). As soon as such happenings and conditions make their appearance, the person in question is declared a kiranga and has to officiate at the ceremonies of the holy spear which are performed on so many occasions (No. 19, pp. 462-463) and to mediate between humanity, suffering or filled with metaphysical urges, and the spirits and gods.

791 As has been mentioned before, in Ruanda the ecstatic mediators of the world of the spirits are called imandwa. They are male or female, divinely chosen mediums of one of the principal spirits, i.e., either Riangombe, Binego, Mugassa, or others. Depending on this association with a particular god, they have to adorn themselves in a fashion different from the others. They have to express themselves by growling, hissing,

796 members of the fraternity may participate. The fraternity
794 of the ababandwa admits for religious purposes men, women,
575 Batussi, Bahutu, and Batwa whenever they seem suitable (that is, if they are able to pay the high cost of admission and have influence). This fraternity is also of great social importance in
794 these lands where deep cleavages divide the society as a re-
575 sult of the three-fold racial division into Batussi, Bahutu, and
569 Batwa, the contrasts between the conquering caste and the subjugated group, and the rigid clan organization. In contrast to these distinctions, the order of the ababandwa, who are united in the Riangombe and Kiranga cult, acts as a social equalizer by protecting and promoting its members regardless of the race, caste, or clan they belong to.

● 756 There is another group of persons who maintain close
791 relations with the world of the spirits and are endowed with supernatural powers by them: the sorcerers, medicine men, magicians, who might all be described by the collective term abafumu (sing., umufumu). This is a Bantu word which is also used in Unjamwesi. It describes someone who uses magical remedies and amulets (No. 19, p. 461). The abafumu are medical practitioners who attempt to ward off misfortune and disease by using supernatural powers and remedies since, after all, every ailment or accident is due to the supernatural influence of evil spirits (see "Medicine," p. 140).

756 Without doubt the umufumu is the most powerful person in his community. Very often he is more powerful than the king's official, the mutwale. "He is, at the same time, physician and apothecary, conjurer, counselor and priest, a beloved friend of the family, and a universal helper in need. It is his privilege to discover the designs which Imana and Kiranga [130] and his companions have concerning the destiny of poor, ordinary mortals. The eyes of the umufumu are sharper and better penetrate the veil of the supernatural, to him the invisible god reveals his wishes, he is his favorite and mediator .... The modern European regards all phenomena as natural and uses natural techniques to control them; the Murundi, on the other hand, regards everything except water and grass as a manifestation of the supernatural which must be treated

756 accordingly" (No. 45, 1913, p. 46). As a rule the craft of the umufumu is passed on from father to son, but it is also possible for extraordinary events or experiences suddenly to lead a Murundi, who until then has not felt any inclination to be an umufumu, to practice sorcery (kuragusa), for example, if he is unexpectedly saved from death. Then people say: "You have been chosen by Kiranga, and you must help us and mediate between him and us. Go and find the necessary objects, we shall come." If someone has thus been elevated to the status of the abafumu without any of his doing, if for many years he practices his craft and is sought after by numerous suffering people, success quite understandably often causes a kind of auto-suggestion and self-deception. Gradually the umufumu begins to believe more and more in his own power. He does after all believe in the magic of Kiranga, and besides, quite often he uses real and effective medicines in his cures. However, pious belief often goes hand in hand with a liberal dose of deliberate deception.

751 789 Father Gassldinger gives an excellent description of the versatility of the abafumu in inventing and manufacturing their amulets and also of their function as magicians which affects every situation in the life of a Murundi: "The little stranger has hardly arrived on this earth when his brother, uncle, or nephew runs to the umufumu and asks him to come to the hut and to bring along his isato, the magic wand. The umufumu does not have to be asked twice. He puts a large number of peculiarly shaped pieces of wood and bones into a bag and immediately appears at the side of the newborn infant. The family may be rich, and in this case a great show must be made to earn the generous reward which is expected. First, he spends quite a while practicing all kinds of tricks. When he has finished with this, he solemnly takes the real iviheko from his bag: finger-length pieces of wood covered with butter and red earth and with a hole in the middle; then a few seeds of a sacred tree adroitly wrapped in twisted straws; a little antelope horn filled with ocherous earth into which are stuck small pieces

789 by iviheko. They also neutralize the evil influence of personal enemies. When at war, the night before the battle, the Murundi sleeps on his beloved iviheko, and he is laid to rest in the grave together with his iviheko.

"Once the body of a Murundi has been made invulnerable, it is still necessary to secure his property. Another amulet is fastened to the spear, or a special stick bought from the umufumu is carried in the same hand as the spear, or a magic sign may be scratched into the iron of the spear. An additional amulet is fastened to the top of the bowstring. Inside the hut a pile of amulets is buried in the ground near the entrance, one amulet is fastened above the entrance, but the most powerful and effective ones are placed near the three hearth stones. There are other amulets used in the fields, against hail and storm, against locusts and other calamities. Very frequently one may find them also on roads, especially on those leading to the banana groves or directly to the hut. If one is careless, he may easily stumble over slabs of wood colored ochre-red, protruding about five centimeters from the ground, and that, after all, is their purpose: a person with evil intent is expected to stumble and fall on the road, thus revealing himself to be an umurosi (malicious witches or wizards)." (No. 45.)

791 293 424 756 The magic power of the umufumu is handed down in families, not only by blood relationship but also by transfer of the insignia characteristic of the umufumu, which consist chiefly in a leopard skin, a headdress made of a cow's tail (Plate 54) and goat hair, a gourd rattle, a stick with charms, a certain way of painting the body and the face with light-colored clay and fat, etc. (No. 19, p. 461).

791 756 The abafumu of the Batwa enjoy a special reputation. They are feared by the Barundi because of their strong magic powers, but they are also consulted for cures. The supreme head of all medicine men, however, resides in Uha (No. 19, p. 462). He lives in the northern district of Ujungu and was formerly called Kawango, the name of one of the spirits of the interlacustrine region. He was probably the medium of this god.

791 This chief sorcerer was a kind of Delphic Oracle for the entire
●756 interlacustrine region. He enjoyed such a high reputation that the kings of Urundi and Ruanda often sent missions to him to obtain the benefit of his counsel. The same is also frequently reported of the rulers of Usindja (No. 35, pp. 498, 506). As far as the sorcerers of Urundi, Kisiba, Ussumbwa, and other adjoining areas are concerned, we know that at times they travel to Uha in order to learn higher magic from the famous abafumu who live there. On the other hand, there are Baha medicine men who are employed as "court sorcerers" by various rulers of the interlacustrine region. The influential court sorcerer of the Urundi king, Mutaga, is also a Muhutu from Uha. His name is Kiburua (Ndandi), and he is well provided for by the king (report by von Langenn). It appears that all these Baha sorcerers are Bahutu, Bantu. This again is connected with the fact that the Bantu is by nature inclined toward mysticism and that the Bantu population is much older than the Bahima immigrants. There is no sorcerers' school in Urundi or Ruanda, where one might learn the secret teachings and practices from a "Council of Wise Men," but, as has been mentioned above, power and wisdom is passed on from one generation to the other within the family. Whoever has inherited these attributes and wishes to augment them must try to imitate the techniques of other magicians.

[132] As is evident from the examples reported by Father
756 Gassldinger which have been listed above, the functions of the umufumu are extremely varied. They encompass all conceivable physical ailments of man and animal, and the umufumu applies innumerable natural and supernatural techniques for assuaging and curing them. In the opinion of the Barundi, however, the natural remedies are not successful merely because of their natural characteristics -- for what does he know about physical and chemical effects, about the physiology of the body, or about causality, etc. -- but their effects stem from supernatural
[753] powers imparted to them by the umufumu. They believe that sickness, when not a case of direct poisoning, is usually caused by the supernatural influence of evil spirits (abarosi). It is, of
756 course, true that the Murundi, for his domestic use, applies
757 a great number of simple remedies which have been passed down

756 to him for generations, but this is done before the "case" be-
757 comes serious and requires the attention of an umufumu. These remedies are in a class by themselves (p. 140), and at this point we are only discussing sorcery, magic remedies and their application.

755 Regardless of the kind of remedy which is to be applied, the Murundi first tests its effectiveness by external application. Even those remedies which can only be of help if taken internally are first strapped or spread on the ailing part of the body since they are expected to have a magical power similar to an amulet. Even European medicines meant to be taken internally, such as pills, powders, or tablets, are first wrapped in a leaf by the Murundi and tied to the sick organ. Only if he does not feel any improvement after that, will he finally make up his mind to swallow or drink them.

751 There are countless numbers of true amulets (iviheko)
789 which are made of various substances and in various shapes. They are always worn suspended on the body in a small compact form (Plate 55). We have already listed quite a number of these above (p. 130). Usually they are suspended from the neck on strings, but frequently they are also tied to the head, to the belly, or to the genitalia, etc. At times each one hangs on a separate piece of string, at other times dozens of different kinds are strung up on a single piece of string, similar to a necklace. The material used for making the amulet is not as important as the sorcery through which the umufumu imparts supernatural powers to the object, but in most cases the amulet consists of a piece of wood three to six centimeters long, if for no other reason than that it is easiest to produce and to carry. One may also see claws or hooves of leopards, cats, goats, and sheep, the bones of birds, pieces of snake skin or the fur of wild animals, dried fruit, mussels, pebbles with unusual shapes, but, most frequently, powder from various types of soil, ashes of burnt bones or of the horns of animals, and flour made of various kinds of grain (No. 19, p. 29). Usually these powdery charms are poured into a small cattle, goat, or antelope horn whose opening is then closed with wax. Hollowed out fruit

644 C. Aside from the haruspices, diviners, and sacrificers we
791 have just mentioned, the king retains appointed representatives of every possible and imaginable kind of sorcery.

A whole crowd of sorcerers toils for the monarch and his court: necromancers (Abashyitsi or abahamagazi), conjurer-magicians (Abahuzi), makers of philters and charms (abanyanzaratsi), makers of amulets (abachunyi), etc.

Strangers who came from Bunyabungu or Buhunde (regions located to the north and west of Lake Kivu), from Uswi or Ujinja (on the shores of /Lake/ Victoria), etc., are no less popular than their autochthonous colleagues and sometimes surpass them in the novelty or originality of their art.

There was even once a dispensary for charms and poisons (ubulozi, plural amarozi or ibirozi) which one requisitioned from afar or attempted to make on the spot, although it appears that these experiments met with little success.

The plants whose juice, bark, or leaves were used were not among the most poisonous, as we shall see later.

We may add that the reputation of these magicians seems to have been more impressive than their deeds or the consequences of those deeds.

649' In all justice one must except from this statement the conjurer-
●756 magicians called abahuzi, whose crimes /394/ and misdeeds are too
791 numerous to list (1). It is difficult to understand how they managed

1. "To seek" is guhura in Kinyarwanda, hence the word umuhuzi, "seeker," given to this fearsome group of sorcerers. Guhurish' ihembe means "to seek with the horn," and guhurish' umunwa, "to seek with the mouth" (in the patient's body).

to exploit public credulity with impunity through so many centuries. The popular expression "to have blood on one's hands" may be fully

644 applied to them. They are said to have the power of identifying
●756 spell casters and bewitchers and also of expelling from the patient's
791 body whatever is claimed to have caused the illness, poisoning, or bewitchment.

The remove the source of evil with a small horn or a gourd
[755] in the guise of a cupping glass, or even with their own mouth, and produce before the bedazzled spectators bones, pebbles, toads, snake heads, and other incredible objects removed with the instrument. The Banyarwanda have boundless faith in the effectiveness of this method and tell of marvelous cures obtained in this fashion.

It is no use trying to reason with them about this. The elders are especially intractable.

791 In order to unmask the jettatori /from Italian/ and other such cronies, our miracle workers (abahuzi) use another horn full of incongruous and even unmentionable things.

Popular belief adds that they set out in the nude, horn in hand. The horn moves and twists about, people say, as if possessed
[683] by an invisible spirit. It leads to the alleged spell casters and bewitchers, who were killed on the spot without furthur ceremony prior to the arrival of the Europeans.

The native Blacks add that ingredients used to bewitch or to produce a spell /395/ were discovered in the same manner, no matter whether they had been buried or hidden in a hut (1).

1. The case is cited of several individuals in whose possession a collection of bones was found, and who confessed of their own accord that they were spell casters and bewitchers. It is possible that those unfortunate people, having fallen prey to autosuggestion, believed in the effectiveness of their baleful activities.